



Community Working Group on Health

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## CWGH Journalistic and Media Awards Report

*26 May 2017, Bulawayo*

**Theme: “Professional Health Reporting for Positive Change”**

By Caiphas Chimhete

With support from



## **Background**

The Community Working Group on Health (CWGH) has been working with journalists from Matabeleland and Midland provinces for the past four years under the Oxfam-funded projects including the "Strengthening Social Accountability Monitoring and Responsiveness to Sexual Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR) project. It was during the training sessions, where journalists were being capacitated with sexual and reproductive knowledge, that the idea of recognizing scribes that excel in reporting sexual and reproductive issues was mooted. During the training sessions, which involved experts from other civil society organizations (CSOs) and government, journalists from different media houses were equipped with skills that enabled them to report knowledgeably using the right terminology.

Each journalist was requested to submit at least three stories published or broadcasted between January 1, 2015 and 30 April 2017 on issues to do with Public Health, Maternal, Child and Sexual Reproductive Health Rights in Zimbabwe. The three article limit was however waived on articles that were part of a series of stories in a campaign or investigation.

The ceremony was attended by 25 journalists from several media houses, representatives of civil society organizations, partner organisations and stakeholders including the National Aids Council (NAC), HOCIC and MMPTZ. Douglas Moyo, the Bulawayo NAC officer gave the keynote address urging journalists to be truthful and objective in their reporting.

He also urged civil society organizations to work together to ensure that people get the best of combined efforts.

### ***Awards and Winners***

CWGH Board member, Mr Norbert Dube gave the welcome remarks appreciating the leading role that journalists play in promoting quality health provision through professional and responsible reporting. He said the symbiotic relationship between CWGH and the journalists apart from giving birth to the awards saw media practitioners receiving training in health reporting.

He highlighted that CWGH places the media at the centre of its activities and recognises the key role that the media plays in informing, educating and raising awareness on various health issues affecting communities in the country. Media advocacy remains an integral part of CWGH's work in our efforts to raise awareness on health issues as well as influence policies on health.

He said the CWGH fully embraces the concept of equity and universal health coverage, (UHC) in Zimbabwe in line with the primary health care philosophy. To this end the CWGH has worked closely with the MoHCC, supporting the implementation of its National Health Strategy, 2016-2020. He chronicled problems in the health sector such as shortage of staff and drugs, the proliferation of both communicable and non-communicable diseases.

He urged the media to continue reporting health issues affecting our communities in a fair and balanced manner in line with the theme of the event "PROFESSIONAL HEALTH REPORTING FOR POSITIVE CHANGE".

Adjudication was done by veteran journalists and former ZBC TV reporter, Tapfuma Machakaire with the assistance of the CWGH secretariat. Machakaire now runs a thriving media production business.

Machakaire said accuracy, truthfulness, fairness and balance earned the winners the awards. He said the judges looked at originality of the story and multi-sourcing which is very important if the story is to be informative. He added that the judges also assessed the story's impact to society.

**Chronicle Reporter**, Thandeka Moyo won the first prize. She walked away with \$500, a certificate and a trophy. The first runner-up, a freelance journalist Jermaine Ndhlovu received \$300, a certificate and a trophy. Freelance journalists Pamenus Tusu and Annastancia Ndlovu got \$100 each and a certificate.



*Chronicle reporter Thandeka Moyo (left) receives a certificate and a trophy from Mr Douglas Moyo, the Bulawayo National Aids Council officer (right), while Mr Nobert Dube looks on during the CWGH Health reporting journalists awards at a Bulawayo on May 26, 2017.*



*Winners from left: Pamenus Tusso, Thandeka Moyo, Jermaine Ndlovu & Anastasia Ndlovu*

In his closing remarks, CWGH director Itai Rusike said he was happy that unlike in the olden days, health issues were making it as news. "It will take efforts by the Government, the private sector and the media to ensure our health sector is revived, "We also want to appreciate media houses represented here for their effort in spreading health messages," said Rusike.





CWGH Executive Director, Itai Rusike giving closing remarks at the media awards ceremony

Rusike expressed concern that government was continuously procrastination in amending the Public Health Bill has seriously comprised the health of citizens. For example, Harare has become the epicentre of archaic diseases such as cholera and typhoid, he noted.

“Where is the Public Health Bill? Where is it floating? When I was the vice chairperson of the Public Health Advisory Board, we worked on reviewing the Public Health Act and submitted our submissions to the Minister of Health but its two sessions of parliament down the line. In the last session, the President said the Act will be brought to parliament but nothing happened so far. We are saying the reason why Zimbabwe has become a health hazard is because of the weaknesses in the current Public Health Act,” said Rusike.

The CWGH director also criticized the government for prioritising the employment of soldiers and police officers while leaving qualified nurses to roam the streets.

“I am yet to see an unemployed soldier and police officer? Why are we not prioritising the health sector? Why are we having qualified nurses sitting at home when we have got a shortage of nurses,” he rhetorically asked.

Rusike highlighted that Zimbabwe was still using the staff establishment of 1983, when the country had a population of 7, 5 million but that has since doubled to about 14 million while the

disease burden as also worsened. He also expressed concern over the high maternal mortality in the country.

### **Way forward**

CWGH plans to make the journalistic and media awards an annual and national event to include journalists from other regions of the country. This plan will be determined mainly by the availability of funds.

The Oxfam-funded "Strengthening Social Accountability Monitoring and Responsiveness to Sexual Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR) project will end in June 2017 but CWGH to continue working with the journalists under other programmes to ensure the gains realized out of the relationship will not come to naught.

CWGH and NAC to try and synchronize their work plans in relation to working with the media to avoid duplication of activities that are designed meant to achieve the same objective. This will also minimize costs.

**ENDS/**